

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 881

By Herron

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mr. John Latham, Jr. of Camden.

WHEREAS, it was with great sadness and a deep sense of loss that the members of this General Assembly learned of the death of Mr. John Latham, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Latham was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a longtime resident of Benton County, John Latham was a highly respected member of the Camden community; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Latham was a pioneer in radio broadcasting whose vision and foresight were unparalleled; and

WHEREAS, John Latham was involved with several radio stations during his illustrious career, owning and having an interest in radio stations in Bolivar; Muscle Shoals, Alabama; Dresden; Mayfield, Kentucky; Fulton, Kentucky; McKenzie; and Jackson, in addition to co-owning the top 40 radio station, WRJB-FM 98.3, and the country radio station, WFWL-AM 1220 in Camden; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Latham worked astutely in almost every area of radio broadcasting, including selling advertising, working in management, performing live broadcasts, announcing special events, and engineering; he had earned the respect and admiration of his peers and audience alike for the superior quality of his work; and

WHEREAS, John Latham's superior journalistic instincts were demonstrated when he was one of the first persons on the scene when Patsy Cline's plane crashed in 1963; he was the only news reporter to broadcast live from the site of the Waverly railroad explosion on February 24, 1978; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Latham's good humor and easygoing manner will especially be missed; after coining the phrase "Super 98," he always responded "super duper" when people asked how he was doing; and

WHEREAS, widely known as Benton County's biggest promoter, John Latham tirelessly sought recognition for Benton County as a place of historical significance; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Latham was very knowledgeable about the county's history, especially during the Civil War, and constantly referred to Benton County as "the most historical part of the country"; and

WHEREAS, after visiting a popular tourist attraction centered around a Civil War gunboat in Vicksburg, Mississippi, John Latham dreamed of raising the five Union gunboats that were sunk in the Tennessee River by General Nathan Bedford Forrest during the Civil War and developing the site to bring tourists to Benton County; and

WHEREAS, to realize his dream, Mr. Latham formed Raise the Gunboats, Inc. with partners, Mike Baloga and Butch Borchert, to raise money and build community support for his vision that would greatly benefit the area for many years to come. The company has now begun to realize its founder's dream, in that it has successfully raised a derrick boat, which is currently on display at Birdsong Marina; and

WHEREAS, to raise support and awareness for his pet project, John Latham wrote a book, *Raise the Gunboats*, which covers the history of the county, including Benton County's

involvement in the Civil War, the area's contribution to radio and music, and even Mr. Latham's own memoirs. The book was entirely produced in Benton County, from the dictation of the book, to the typesetting and layout, and finally its printing by Press Pros Printing in Camden; and

WHEREAS, throughout his exemplary life, John Latham exemplified the spirit and dedication of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, loving the Lord and endeavoring to lead an exemplary Christian life, John Latham was an active and devout member of the First Baptist Church in Camden; and

WHEREAS, a civic-minded individual, John Latham donated his time and incredible talents to a number of noteworthy causes and organizations, including the Gideons, the Camden Lions Club, the Benton County Animal Shelter, the drive-through Adopt-a-Pet program, and various other animal protection projects; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Latham was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, John Latham enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife of 58 years, Virginia Latham, and was the proud father of Kathy Meise and Fred Latham; and

WHEREAS, he was also the grandfather of Renee Wofford and Luke Latham, and will be sorely missed by his sister, Mae Haywood; and

WHEREAS, John Latham leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Mr. John Latham, Jr., reflecting fondly upon his

impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our deepest sympathy and offer our sincere condolences to the family of John Latham, Jr.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.